NEW OBJECTIVE FOR THE CHURCH

REV. FRUHLING'S SUNDAY MORNING SERMON.

No Religious Aim That Ignores Modern Knowledge Can Ever Hope to Serve.

At the Presbyterian Church Sunday morning, Rev. A. F. Fruhling, the pastor, spoke on the new objective of the church, saying in part:

The delegates at the peace table are seeking an objective, a definite aim, without which no satisfactory and lasting terms of peace can be adopted. All powers that be must be properly controlled and directed for the common good or else civilization will soon become another crisis more terrible than this war has been. At the beginning of this reconstruction period our objectives should be clearly defined and most carefully determined, for upon them largely depend the ultimate good of whatever terms of peace may be drafted.

What shall the objective of the church be? What aim shall religion serve to accomplish? To get people converted? To save sinners? To secure members for the church? The development of Christian character? These have been the objectives of the church, and worthily so, but they no longer meet human needs, and we ought to find out why not, and be willing to alter our aim to suit the need.

Education Has Changed.

Education has had to change its objective. It formerly was learning, culture, character. But it has been discovered that many a learned man is of no use in the world. As for culture, it surely is of priceless value That refinement of tastes and interests expressed in sympathy for and appreciation of that which is noble and beautiful and true in literature, art, music and science. That refinement of manners which acts in accordance with the highest moral sense of honor, decency and respect. The world surely needs culture; yes, but it has been discovered that a man needs more than culture! A true and noble character is God's greatest handiwork. The man who can be relied upon always to do what he ought to do, and never to do what he ought not to do, is the man Christ wants and the world is seeking after But character as the immediate objective of education has failed to meet man's needs.

Consequently education has had to change its objective. The modified aim of education is set forth in the following extract from an address delivered before the last meeting of the National Teachers' Association by Homer H. Seeley, the president of Iowa state teachers' college: "Modern education finds itself compelled to recognize the demands of industrial education and training as a major question that has passed the point of discussion and, is now by state and national legislation to be introduced as an effective part of public school work. It has been decided that educational organization and management must provide such instruction as the masses need to enable them to lead a productive and an efficient industrial life." Education now aims to develop such understanding and give such discipline and training as will fit one for his chosen pursuit in life, enabling him to live therein wisely, happily and successfully. Our schools now seek to help a man choose his work in life intelligently and make him efficient for it.

Business Has Changed Its Objective.

Likewise business has had to change its objective. The aim of business has always been—and still is—profit. Men, at the risk of loss, produce commodities for the market, or buy and sell them for profit. But, nevertheless, business has changed from a "business-is-business" policy to one of sincere service and honest profit. One of the world's greatest authorities on business matters, Joseph French Johnson, dean of the New York University School of Commerce, Accounts and Finance, defines the aim of modern business thus: "We are all seeking compensation, but he who does so only in terms of dollars and cents is cheap and sordid and incapable of the finest achievements. . . . . Business, money, profits are not ends in themselves, but are the means by which men live. Man is on earth to live, not merely to make a living." And again Johnson writes, "The dignity and importance of business has ever been increasing and is today recognized fully and held in high respect. . . . . Business is growing more honest in its dealings and is becoming more trustworthy."

The modern business man must become more than a profiter; he must be every inch a man, one whose interests extend beyond his business. He must measure up to the Johnson standard: "The word, 'commercial,' in popular opinion is now losing its taint, but it will not have unquestioned place in the ethical 'Blue Book' until business men have proved by their lives, as well as by their donations, their unselfish interest in social welfare, in religion, in education, in the improvement of labor conditions, in the abolition of poverty

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and in the stability of law and government with equal rights and impartial justice for all."

The Reason of These Changes.

And what has transformed the aims of education and business? A New Life, a more abundant life that has multiplied man's interests a thousandfold; that has opened up new worlds for him to conquer; that has empowered him with undreamt-of forces; that has awakened in him an enlarged sense of freedom; that has fired him with a zeal for yet greater achievements, and that has placed at his disposal a knowledge and understanding adequate for his ultimate and certain triumph.

And this New Life, that has changed everything in man's world, demands that the aim of religion be changed also!

The values of the New Life supercede all former valuations and must be recognized and enforced. No religious aim that ignores modern knowledge can ever hope to serve the present age. Loyalty to the new values of life must largely become the expression of our religion. A pertinent student once asked Professor William James, "When will the millenium come?" That eminent psychologist replied, "When every human being does the best that is in him." Helping a man to do the best that is in him is the task of a serviceable religion. Dr. Roy Sellars puts it, "The spiritual is man at his best, man loving, daring, creating, fighting loyally and courageously for causes dear to him." The New Life demands of government and institutions that they serve to help the individual in relation to the social order, to develop himself to his best and highest.

New Wine Cannot Be Contained in Old Wine Skins.

The new wine cannot be contained in the old wine-skins. Nor can the new cloth be sewed onto the old garment, but must be made into a whole new suit of clothes. The old theological valuation of man must be discarded. It is not true that a man is altogether bad and worthless, and must be changed by some external supernatural magic from a devil into a saint. The New Life, based upon actual experience and attested thereto by our most comprehensive scientific knowledge and understanding, declares that all that a man is capable of is within himself and needs but to be drawn out by education and training and religious application to make him what he ought to be. According to the New Life human nature is not corrupt, but is essentially sound and good, and it is the potential worth of the natural man that makes him a saveable being. Man must stand on his own merits in the game of life, and no clinging to a god will excuse him from his responsibility to home, community, state and mankind.

New Church Methods.

The church must seek to save them that are lost (all who are not yet at their best), not by means of an impotent theology, but by the religious application of the principles of psychology and sociology. And by so doing the church will return to the method of the Master Teacher, Jesus Christ, who treated each person upon his individual merits and was satisfied to help him up one step at a time. Jesus knew the value of just a human being, declaring that he was worth more than a whole world. And Jesus understood human nature; he did not say that evil comes from a devil but straight from the heart of man, and he declared that the kingdom of God was within man. You are your own hell and your own heaven. You cannot be saved except you save yourself by the right direction of your own desires, by the compulsion of your own will to act in obedience to the laws of being, by the vision and training of your own mind, and by placing yourself in such attitudes as will harmonize you with your human environment and attune you to the infinite. AND THIS IS GOD WORKING WITHIN YOU TO WILL AND TO DO.

And will the adapting of the church aim to the requirements of the New Life be a gain or a loss? Has education lost by its change of objective? Is there less learning and culture and character in the world? Surely not. Nor has business lost, but gained. Did Christianity lose when it discarded Judaism to conform to the new life which Jesus brought? Did Christ lose when he emptied himself of his glory and came down here to live with us as a human being? Nor will the church lose if it alters its aim in full recognition of modern knowledge and in full appreciation of human values and in full co-operation with government, business and education in their common purpose to lift every individual and all human society up to the very highest that is within man. This is the will of God and the church, above all, should seek to do His will.

R. A. M. Installs Officers.